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CRITICISM IN THIS ISSUE:

- **F. R. SCOTT AND THE MODERN POETS**
  BY LOUIS DUDEK
- **NUMBER TEN REPORTS**
  BY HAROLD HORWOOD
- **THE PAST DECADE IN CANADIAN POETRY**

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Who Supports the Arts?

(The following excerpts from the article, WHO SUPPORTS THE ARTS ?, *by Walter Herbert, Director of the Canada Foundation, are reprinted from* FOOD FOR THOUGHT *by permission of the editors.)*

In most countries today it is not difficult to discern the chief patron of the arts, because the national government performs that function, either directly, through a Ministry, as in the case of European and Latin American states, or indirectly through such state-sponsored organizations as the British Council and the Arts Council of Great Britain. In Canada, however, there is no obvious chief patron of the arts, official or otherwise, and it is not difficult to fall into the error of believing that Canadians are uninterested in art forms and indifferent to the welfare of artists. Actually, there are a large number of important sponsors and encouragers of the arts in Canada, although with most of them interest has local or regional limitations . . .

From the national point of view it seems certain that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is the leading figure, performing persistently and with constructive discrimination the double function of encouraging artistic creation and performance on the one hand, and subtly developing public knowledge and good taste on the other. In the broadcasting of musical, literary, and dramatic matter it performs with notable and acknowledged distinction . . .

One might continue to pick the bones of national government and find a few more bits of cultural meat; but, roughly speaking, the Canadian Government is virtually a nonentity in the area of support or encouragement for artistic activity. The needed support and encouragement on the national level is provided by a variety of non-governmental agencies, under a system which is the Canadian way of life and which is styled Private Enterprise. To indicate some and not others of these agencies may seem invidious, but such a sampling technique is demanded when the space available does not permit notice and description of all who deserve it. Generalizing, one may say that commercial corporations are a mainstay and chief support, directly or indirectly, of Canadian cultural activity. Particularizing, one thinks of things like the York Knitting Mills' "Singing Stars of Tomorrow" with its unprecedented encouragement of young Canadian singers and its incidental employment of accompanying instrumentalists; of the Robert Simpson Company's "Pop Concerts", which give employment to a great company of musicians

and delight a great audience of listeners; of the Ryerson Press's dogged devotion to the publication of books about Canadian art and literature; of the Chartered Bank's leadership in commissioning artistic works for the embellishment of public buildings; of the daily and periodical press, which plays a steady, and on the whole unrewarding, part in telling the Canadian right hand what the Canadian left hand is doing artistically. The graphic arts receive eager and generous support from Canadian industry, in a manner which goes far beyond the mere buying of illustration or design for commercial purposes . . .

Looking at the matter from the provincial point of view brings new, and in some respects exciting, governmental participation into view. Provincial governments cannot possibly plead that education is a matter of federal jurisdiction, so they are able to support the arts with a clear official conscience, and a gay and giving heart. Most notable among the provincial phenomena is the part taken by the government of Quebec in promoting cultural activity among the people of the province. Every form of cultural and artistic activity is encouraged, with eagerness and understanding and generosity. Until only a few years ago the amount appropriated each year by the Quebec legislature for cultural purposes — for scholarships and awards, for salaries and premises and equipment, for the exchange of students and scholars, for the purchase of books and works of art, for the publication of manuscripts, for a hundred and one other forms of artistic encouragement — exceeded the total amount appropriated for such purposes by all the other provincial legislatures combined with the Canadian parliament thrown in. Quebec is still far out in front as an official patron of the arts in Canada . . .

What of the individual patron of the arts in Canada? Well, like the bison he is a fast-disappearing species — a victim of indiscriminate hunting by the white man's tax-collectors. There are, of course, a number of well-to-do Canadians who are genuinely and generously interested in our artists and who contribute gladly toward their success. But even the wealthiest citizen today is obliged to spread his patronage very thin, and the arts must share with the ever-growing demands of social work, when the rich man's emaciated little melon is sliced. Despite this, however, it is likely that if the facts could be collected, and happily they connot, we would find that the unobtrusive, personal support of the arts by a small group of relatively wealthy people is still a very substantial factor in Canada's cultural life.

Walter Herbert

F. R. Scott and the Modern Poets

Louis Dudek

(This article is the second in a series designed to illustrate the native elements in Canadian writing against a cosmopolitan background. Other articles will appear from time to time. — Ed.)

The first quality which will strike the reader in the poetry of F. R. Scott is a clear-sightedness which is both winning in its directness and, perhaps deliberately, limited in its scope. The reader will not be surprised. It is a quality which in one form or another has been characteristic of other Canadian poets. In most cases it is hardly a sign of "native vigour", though it may go well with certain beauties which symbolize it : the transparent icicle, the cold snow, the autumn air. We exploit our innocence to make it a virtue. Described critically (and this has no special application to Professor Scott) as a lack of complication in our feeling and thinking, a willingness to be satisfied with surfaces and single facets of things, it may be a clue to our greatest needs. We reveal the simplifications in a partly isolated culture of patterns and tendencies which exist in a more complicated form outside : single currents of what is or was happening in the literatures of England, France, America. John Sutherland has suggested at times that we could deal with Canadian writers by comparing them with prototypes whom they resemble in the parent literatures; ironically, this might give us an insight not only into the individual quality of our Canadian writing but also at times into English and American poetry. Canada might provide an experimental field in which trends of British and American poetry find a clear and interesting form of expression. The poetry of F. R. Scott offers a favourable test case for such a view ; and on this theory I will try to draw a parallel between his poetry and some of the tendencies in English poetry in our time.

Scott's poetry, as it has appeared since 1926, in the *McGill Fortnightly Review*, in the *Canadian Forum*, in our literary magazines, and

in the single book *Overture* (1945), is an example in our literature of the turning away of one generation from another, in this case the son departing from the ways of the father. F.R. Scott's father, Frederick George Scott, was a noted Archdeacon of the Anglican church, a Canadian padre at the front in World War I, and a highly-regarded poet in his own right. He belonged to the same generation and literary period, if not to the same school, as Archibald Lampman and Bliss Carman, whose successors make up the long line trailing to the Canadian Authors' Association membership of 1950. A poet of integrity, imaginative vigour, and respectable good quality in versification, Frederick George Scott, although he died as late as 1944, represents for the Canada of 1890-1920 the solid Victorian tradition of faith, earnestness, and moral energy which we admire in Carlyle, Ruskin, and Tennyson, but which by the nineties was being shaken from its foundations by the first generation of rebels, the aesthetes of the *Yellow Book ;* a tradition which after 1910 was further undermined, if not totally demolished, by the so-called "moderns" of various schools. It is to his father as a representative of Victorian earnestness and faith carried over to Canada that F. R. Scott, on the satirical side of his poetry, stands in antithesis ; and therefore his position in Canadian poetry, curious as that may at first seem, is literally the same as that of the combined Eliot-Auden generations in England. Or to put it simply, he is our first representative "modern poet".

The outburst of modern poetry in England can be seen clearly from one point of view if it is understood as a revolt against, or rather an abandonment of, that class which had set the pace in all things human from the French Revolution on, the class which had replaced the aristocracy and had inherited (so it believed) its refinement from the aristocracy. We are now at a point, when we are beginning to regret the loss of the upper bourgeoisie, and when the true content of our literature — the effort to save a civilizing tradition — finds itself helpless without the real support of a social class which might embody it; but modern literature arose in the spirit of a lively rebellion, the rebellion of bourgeois and middle class artists against the worn-out literary and social accoutrements of the respectable middle class. Bourgeois culture was first undermined by members of its own class (as the eighteenth century aristocracy had been), and today its ghost is being nostalgically revived in the prospect of a grim demagogic future : the civilization which the bourgeoisie has carried thus far needs to find new hands to bear it forward against the

threatening barbarism, either of capitalistic advertising-democracy or police-state communism. T. S. Eliot, most prominently, has taken a stand in defence of a class society based on permanently established élites, although he is aware that the bourgeoisie, or upper middle class, has passed, or "is commonly said to be passing".

Whether it is "past, or passing, or to come," I have heard a friend, a German poet of the last generation, Jacob Picard, say sadly that European culture of the time before 1910 was an Age of Gold which has been lost to us forever ; and Stephen Spender in a lecture recently reflected that we have lost in losing the bourgeoisie both a support and a valid citadel of attack, so that without it modern poetry is the unbounded homeless thing it is. As I write this, an article has come out in *Partisan Review* (December, 1950) laying at the door of the "intellectuals" some of the blame for the political consequences which have followed the collapse of the bourgeoisie. Hannah Arendt writes in "The Mob and the Elite" : "... only an inherent fundamental short coming of character in the intellectual, "*la trahison des clercs*" (J. Benda), or a perverse self-hatred of the spirit, accounted for the delight with which this elite accepted the "ideas" of the mob."

But this is in 1950. We must turn back for sharp contrast to D. H. Lawrence's "How Beastly the Bourgeois is" ; T. S. Eliot's "Prufrock," Aunt Helen," "Cousin Nancy," satires of that bourgeoisie whose ghost we would now exorcise ; Pound's "Portrait d'une femme," and the satires in "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" and "Moeurs contemporaines" ; or any of a score of poems in the Auden and Spender decade.

> "Where is the bourgeois, the backbone of our race ?
> Bent double with lackeying, the joints out of place;
> Behind bluffs and lucky charms hiding to evade
> An overdue audit, anaemic, afraid...
> They're paying for death on the instalment plan
> Who hoped to go higher and failed to be men."
>
> (C. Day Lewis)

We can put it this way : the bourgeoisie in its last stages, with its amenities, its pieties, its Sunday morning gravity, proliferated and perpetuated a nauseating, decayed poetry of mediocre moralizing, philosophizing and lyricizing — the last dregs of romanticism — against which the moderns raised their war, a war "against all sorts of mortmain" (Pound) ; and therefore their iconoclasm in poetry implied a

social break with the bourgeoisie — a break whose consequences are now being regretted. And as we know, it was by resort to satire and to wholesale caricature, as always when a historical rejection takes place, that this war was fought.

In Canada, this war against the effete bourgeois tradition is not yet finished. But its pattern here is the same ; so that by contrasting the work of F. R. Scott with that of his father the relationship of one generation to the other becomes clear.

The method of F. R. Scott, the modernist, is satire. Where his senior had sung vigorously of the life of respectability and its wholesome virtues, he throws out persistent jibes at the career bourgeois, the one who makes a success of playing the politics of the ruling class and ends with L. L. D.'s and finally a British peerage. In "Boston Tea Party : 1940" he takes a whack at Eliot's own Bostonians :

> "While D. A. R.'s and Ph. D.'s
> And "How-d'ye-do's" and "Is-that-so's"
> Are wafted on a scented breeze
> That piles the orchid on the rose."

Where his father had been moved to the old Wordsworthian pantheistic theme,

> "Something in my inmost thinking
> Tells me I am one with you,
> For a subtle bond is linking
> Nature's offspring through and through . . ."

F. R. Scott, in one of his poems,

> "Brings a reminder from the barren north
> Of the eternal lifeless processes."

Where his father's poetry was deeply and earnestly moved by an explicit religious faith, so that he could say after reading Darwin's *Origin of Species,*

> "The pulse of our life is in tune with the rhythm
> of forces that beat
> In the surf of the furthest star's sea and are spent
> and regathered to spend,"

F. R. Scott presents the coming of life in satirical terms :

> "Note, please, the embryo.
> Unseeing
> It survives into being.
> *Elan vital,*

Thyroid, gonads, *et al.*,
preserve the unities . . ."

And where Frederick George Scott could sing,

"O England of our Fathers and England of our sons . . .
For Empire has been ours of old and Empire ours shall be . . ."

the prophecy was not fulfilled in the "Sons," for F. R. Scott waxes satirical about our subjected colonialism of mind and throws overboard the virtues of

"Obedience, Loyalty, and Love of Kings."

And finally, where his father had been reconciled to the political and economic status quo, F. R. Scott is an ardent socialist, and the primary aim of his satirical poetry is to spur on the people of Canada to political action and to a radical solution of their problems — problems whose solution in his opinion is indefinitely postponed by the corporate capitalist bourgeoisie of Canada.

Now, there is a vast difference in character between the satirical poetry of F. R. Scott and the comic-satirical poetry of Pound or Eliot or even the satire of the Auden-MacNeice generation, which it more closely resembles. The social satire of Pound and Eliot presents an exasperated digression, which is not really a digression, from the conventional subjects of poetry into a social miasma which they realized lay at the root of their literary troubles. In the case of Pound, through what appears as a digression we arrive at a conception of the organic unity between society in all its ramifications (especially economics) and the fine arts. In the case of Eliot, social analysis leads him to a religious point of view which becomes the subject of great poetry. Perhaps it is only through this sort of "digression" — refusing to lose the artistic purpose — that the political subject can become successful in poetry, as in Dante, Milton, Wordsworth. Now, without intending an offensive comparison, in the poems of F. R. Scott politics assumes the central declarative position for the poet : he becomes too obviously a socialist writing socialistic verse, a man with a political purpose, not a poet distracted by the times into shouting out a political message. Of course, the same narrowing of objectives is to be found in the English poets of the thirties ; and yet a re-reading of their work — or a glance at C. Day Lewis' *A Hope for Poetry* — will show how much more severe is the self-limitation of the Canadian poet. Here, then, is the one-sidedness and simplification of the Canadian position.

Moreover, the comic-satirical poetry coming out of England quivers with a decadent, now-uncoordinated life interwoven with

literary tradition, a complex class-structured society, and age-old institutionalized religion : the social satire of Eliot, and also of the Auden generation, is a plant with a thick and tangled mess of roots hanging from it. That of our Canadian poet, since it is true to Canadian life, is much more simple and unilateral. It is like the clear air, the wide open spaces, the unclouded minds of many Canadians. Some of his verse is a pleasant sort of socialistic *vers de société*, brilliant in its cleverness, but one feels that on the literal, unimaginative and un-literary plane which Scott has chosen, not much can be done. The verse derives in form ultimately from the T. S. Eliot poems of the Sweeney period (1918) and Pound of the quatrains in "Mauberley" and "Moeurs Contemporaines" (going back to Gauthier's Émaux et Camées) ; but it lacks the implications that make these poems of Eliot and Pound sometimes the most difficult of all that they have written. In some of the poems Scott has also adopted the conversational style of Auden and the poets of the thirties; but we now begin to see that there was little gain to poetry in the prosaic chit-chat of Auden and his friends — their best work is of the tighter and more introspective kind. So here again the defect is aggravated and simplified; the blank explicit directness of Scott's satirical verse limits it to a period in time, and the crisp meters bring to mind a clever preacher of the Enlightenment talking down in couplets to his dull brethren. The whole situation is analogical.

Yet in spite of all this, I think that the best of Scott's satirical poems — such poems as "Mural," "Tourist Time", "Lest we Forget," and "The Canadian Authors Meet" — are poems which will be read amongst us for a long time. These verses sparkle with a sharp wit which might best be described in the same terms that Scott uses to describe a Mozart sonata :

> "The bright
> Clear notes fly like sparks through the air
> And trace a flickering pattern of music there."

These are excellent poems in their kind. However, it is not for his satirical verse that Scott deserves the most serious attention as a poet. His best work is in the serious lyrics in the book *Overture*. It is this we now come to consider.

The English poets, after the release provided by satire turned back to what we might conventionally describe as "positions previously prepared" : Eliot to Anglicanism, Pound to a dedication to the arts in a framework of history in *The Cantos* (an epic poem to show when the arts and civilization are sound, when corrupt). The

Auden and Spender generation has followed in the same path as Pound and Eliot. Not that the positions to which these poets retreated were simply old and established positions : what we have been accustomed to consider a "retreat" could just as validly be called an advance. No one ever goes back into the past ; he can only use something in the past to carry him forward. The Anglicanism of Eliot is a revival resulting from a contemporary sense of necessity, a desire to save a dying culture, and to find salvation beyond this Wasteland and death ; and the aestheticism of Pound is certainly unlike that of the followers of Pater, it is involved with a historical and realistic criticism of society, a demand for total health in life and art. And yet at the same time the relation of both poets to the past is very clear, the first to Newman and Matthew Arnold, the second to "art for art". They now represent the counter-revolution, establishing gains and salvaging the past.

We find a similar sort of retreat to positions previously prepared in that poetry of F. R. Scott which is written in a personal and serious vein. Not that this stage of his writing follows in point of time the satirical poems, nor that Scott ever abandons the satirical stage of his writing to turn to a high-serious poetry — perhaps the absence of such a forthright about-face is in itself characteristic of the Canadian weakening of the intensity of the modern tensions ; but when he writes his lyrics we hear another man speaking, not the social reformer, but a muted poet of personal experience and of the place of this experience in the frame of human destiny. In these poems, and they deserve the most careful and sympathetic reading, Scott returns to the situation and subject matter of the poetry of an older generation, really the generation of his father, but making the modifications in tone and outlook which establish these poems as entirely of our own time.

Like the affirmations of the English poets, moreover, this return is not simply a return to the bourgeois tradition of the forefathers. It is an affirmation and a search that in the English poets can be as much related to Pascal and to Dante as to Cardinal Newman ; to twelfth century troubadors as to Swinburne ; to Renaissance humanism as to nineteenth century rationalism and the problems of faith. The bulwarks of defence stand before an older and richer civilization than that of the bourgeoisie — although that class has been its most recent support. In F. R. Scott, the past and the needs of the present are similarly united.

As a single illustration, here are a few verses from a now-

forgotten poem of the late Archdeacon Scott :

"Only the mountains rear their forms,
Silent and grim and bold ;
To them the voices of the storms
Are as a tale re-told.

They saw the stars in heaven hung,
They heard the great Sea's birth,
They know the ancient pain that wrung
The entrails of the earth.

Sprung from great Nature's royal lines,
They share her deep repose, —
Their rugged shoulders robed in pines,
Their foreheads crowned with snows."

The Laurentian Shield is here a symbol of the ageless earth, and the poem, swinging in Tennysonian fashion between scientific wonder (without anxiety, however) and implicit faith, plays on a theme which is recurrent in the poetry of the elder Scott : the imaginative contemplation of geological time and man's career in time and space. Now let us turn to a companion passage in the poetry of F. R. Scott :

"far voices
and fretting leaves
this music the
hillside gives

but in the deep
Laurentian river
an elemental song
for ever

a quiet calling
of no mind
out of long aeons
when dust was blind
and ice hid sound

only a moving
with no note
granite lips
a stone throat"

Here is the same symbol and the same idea of earth history — the history of that ancient Canadian earth and its frozen north — but

used in the context of a contemporary sense of loss, of groping, of refusal to accept anything but the stark realities of scientific truth. Though the security of faith is gone, the poet has returned to the same place to contemplate the same problem. Now there is no answer.

This searching in the old grounds of belief runs through F. R. Scott's poetry :

"Fearfully the mind's hands dig
In the debris of thought, for the lovely body of faith."

It is especially to be seen in the poems using a Christian Symbolism. At times, he almost believes that "truth stands naked" again ; or in an airliner rides where "Man, the lofty worm, tunnels his latest clay" ; but the final and lasting statement is that of the "eternal lifeless processes" in one of his finest poems :

"Come, flaunt the brief prerogative of life,
Dip your small civilized foot in this cold water
And ripple, for a moment, the smooth surface of time."

However, one cannot help feeling as one reads this poetry that it is not all of F. R. Scott that went into the writing of these poems; or at any rate that too much of his energy had been drained in another direction. It is as if Canada were not yet ready to allow a first-rate mind to devote itself wholly to poetry. In F. R. Scott, the moral energy, the active part of the "faith" which he had inherited, was turned to the work of social analysis and political reconstruction. As a leader in the C.C.F. Party he attempted to write the poem of political reality which Edmund Wilson one predicted would someday replace poetry entirely ; and this could only be done at the expense of the poem of imagination on the printed page.

This choice between the political and the artistic prospect is stated most explicitly in the poem "*Overture*", which appeared in the book *New Provinces* (1936) and which gives the title to F. R. Scott's first published book :

"But how shall I hear old music ? This is an hour
Of new beginnings, concepts warring for power,
Decay of systems — the tissue of art is torn
With overtures of an era being born.

And this perfection which is less yourself
Than Mozart, seems a trinket on a shelf,
A pretty octave played before a window
Beyond whose curtain grows a world crescendo."

Who does not remember the days when this was the thing to say ?

The narrowing down of objectives, the "social consciousness" that pushed everything aside before its historic "necessity", these seemed inevitable for the poet in the 1930's ; and in Canada, a country with a minor literature just in its beginning, such an idea imported from abroad was bound to be the more constricting and incomplete.

There is a tiny poem by F. R. Scott entitled "Bookworm" which ironically comments on the literary-minded lover saying goodnight in the atmosphere of a poetic memory from T. S. Eliot :

"Let us cast over this natural event
The drapery of a literary allusion."

And yet, consider how studded with literary allusions is the poetry of Eliot, Pound, Auden ! And what is the "natural event," reality, without imagination and the colourings of time to illumine it ? In this epigram we have the schism of the modern poet, the split between imagination and reality which runs across the *Wasteland* and other poems of T. S. Eliot. In F. R. Scott's work, the "natural event" embraces all the optimistic action and policy leading toward a political future, stated in realistic satirical verse ; and what is left to the serious poetry is a wish for completeness that is never satisfied. The two are never made to burn together as in T. S. Eliot's poetry. But the total imaginable reality, which is so much more than any "natural event," is precisely what the poet desires.

The feeling of being "cut off from wholeness," stated in the poem "Windfall," and the desire to recapture according to the romantic formula

"Whispers of a greener life
When the heart burned"

touches painfully on this subject. It is beautifully expressed, both directly and indirectly, in poems such as "Full Valleys," "Autumnal," "Bedside," "Lost Syllable," "Grey Morning," "Old Song," "Surfaces." One should read these over and over at the cost of omitting a good line or two in the pages of Scott's satirical verse. They express the search that is in all the best poems of our time.

The tone of these poems will be readily compared with that prevailing in T. S. Eliot, but this is not because anything is borrowed: it is the emotional situation, the kind of spiritual martyrdom here which is the same. T. S. Eliot makes great poetical capital out of it, or in spite of it — largely by his wealth of "literary allusion." He relates his dilemma in the wasteland of the modern world to images of a magnificent past. In F. R. Scott's poetry, however, the wasteland remains one of barren rock and cold time.

The result is a frozen poem that may be described as the lyric fossilized, a poem fashioned concisely as a lyric, which is not an expressed emotion, hence a contradiction in terms. The quiet despair of some of Hardy's late lyrics, and some of Edwin Arlington Robinson's, are of this kind. They give us the lyric pared to the bone, the remnant of emotion, an evidence of checkmated vitality, of the frustration of something vital in our nature in modern living.

Successful emotion — not the cerebral and baffled pain which most of us know as "feeling" — is in love with objects in the world, throws bits of reality on the page; it is imaginative; that is, it attaches itself to the *images* of objects. It reasons with shapes, sounds, and actions. Bourgeois culture was languishing in an emotionless and decently smothered poetry of cosmic abstractions and abstract Christian virtues, at best of nature references which were unexperienced and unvisualized. Then came Imagism, Chinese poetry (as analyzed in a famous forgotten essay by Fenollosa), and finally even modern psychology, to tell us that this was death, not life. The real image is the live thing. And so there is a constant and courageous effort in the lyrics of F. R. Scott to achieve the precise image, to concretize the emotion of the poem : for example, "North Stream" may very well be compared with the pure imagery of a poem by William Carlos Williams. But the total effect of Scott's lyrics is that of precision and of intelligence of a high order, not of poetic richness. In terms of William Blake's geography of the soul, one might say that, in literary performance, the intellect, or reason, had encroached too far on the realms of the senses, the imagination, and the active emotions. Or in Shelley's language, poetry had not found the

> "... strength to pierce the guarded wit,
> And pass into the panting heart beneath."

But that is a general criticism that we can make of a good deal of twentieth-century poetry. At least we have the fuller objective in our mind.

And sometimes in Scott's poetry there almost comes an intensification to that white heat which is wholeness, "the whole skylight of thought ... the boundless uplands of art"; but it is momentary. It brings to mind the assured and self-confident energy of imagination and moral will which was in some of the poetry of Frederick George Scott, his father. We have it in the recent excellent poem *Lakeshore* which was printed in *Northern Review :*

> "Sometimes, upon a crowded street
> I feel the endless rain come down,

And in the old magnetic sound
I hear the opening of a gate
That loosens all the seven seas . . ."

And we have it, too, in the closing lines of the poem "Spring, 1941" included in the book *Overture :*

"Drop token loads, but save the harder man,
Eyes to stare at the sun, heart's leap and love.

• • •

Are we born too ? . . . Can we be born
Like sun from night, a fructifying fire ?
Turn dark to fecundation, there is power !
And roll, roll over the springing world."

I believe that in this, and poems like it, there is a hope for Canadian poetry which we shall see more and more realized in the years to come.

THE NORTHERN REVIEW AWARDS, 1950-51

This year our awards for Verse and Fiction are available both to Canadian and non-Canadian writers, for information write the editor, Northern Review, 2475 Van Horne, Apt. 5, Montreal, Canada.

Number Ten Reports

Harold Horwood

(We asked Mr. Horwood, the editor of PROTOCOL, *to give us his impressions, as a Newfoundlander, of writing in Canada. His article follows. — Ed.)*

Canada is distinguished in the field of the arts by being a country whose culture was born senile. For a hundred years it has been seeking a youth which it never possessed, and taking regular injections of aesthetic life from England and America. These cultural shots-in-the-arm, while creating a sort of false and feverish virility, have not imparted the unmistakable sheen of genuine youth.

British immigrants or the sons of Loyalists, upright, moral and conservative, the first Canadian poets were ill-fitted to become the primitives of a national culture, half-legendary singers at the stage of the transition from barbarism. It was not their fault if they gave Canadian literature a bum steer. Such a bum steer was inherent in the very origins of Canada. It is the fault of their successors that they proceeded to build the structure of a Canadian culture upon such a weak base instead of starting from the ground : from the pioneer towns in the forests and the forts of the north and west. It might have been better for the eventual development of Canadian literature had all the poetry from Sangster to Duncan Campbell Scott — including that of Lampman, Carman and Pickthall — remained unpublished, for it is this tradition that has borne such sterile fruit as the Canadian Authors' Association and the Canadian Poetry Magazine.

The birth of a real Canadian poetry did not begin until the 20th century was well advanced. It began almost inaudibly in Raymond Knister. Before that there had been individual poems "often rising to effects of great beauty," to quote E. K. Brown. I do not agree that such was often the case. There were very few indeed that might not now be ignored without loss — Carman's "Low Tide on Grand Pré" and a total of about fifty lines from Lampman's mountain of versification, but nothing that, with the transposition of a few proper nouns, might not have been written in England or Massachusetts. Of itself Knister's poetry is not important. Alan Crawley's

criticisms, that he took a weak, defeatist attitude toward the difficulties and disappointments of life, laboured under a persecution complex, lacked dramatic sensibility and suffered from a paucity of images, are all justified. Yet, after allowance is made for these shortcomings, Knister's poetry stands as a milestone in Canadian Culture. Its importance is historical : he represented for Canada the first effective break with the Victorian conception of Bardism, was the first to write really native Canadian poetry, a poetry which also, in its simplicity and calm, was worthy to form the foundation of a national literature.

I can already hear the objections. What about Lampman The Great and Saint Bliss Carman ? Who could be more Canadian than Pauline Johnson ? True, in a sense, and who could be more American than Edgar Guest ? Not to say that Lampman (or, for that matter, Pauline Johnson) was always, or even usually, down to the Guest level. Both Lampman and Carman were products not of any Canadian movement or typical Canadian experience, but of the English (and American) Romantic Revival in the years of its decay. They illustrate perfectly what I mean when I say that Canadian culture was senile from its birth. They were peculiarly ill-fitted to start a national tradition or to create a national legend.

Knister was a prophet without honour in his own country. Though received and understood by the avant-garde movement of America, he had no measurable influence on his Canadian contemporaries. At the end of his brief life he came close to being entirely forgotten, and probably would not even be a name in our literary history were it not for his resurrection by the group of enthusiastic young moderns who burst suddenly into song in the 1940's. It was they and their friends who created an audience for Dorothy Livesay's collection of his works. Pratt, the other, more vocal, pioneer of a distinctive Canadian literature, was far more fortunate. His clarion voice would have made itself heard anywhere, and, though it failed to appeal to the semi-literate audience reached by Robert Service, it did not require a poet, or even a lover of poetry, to appreciate some of the qualities of the *Cachalot* and the forceful diction in which the story was clothed.

There is something genuinely Canadian in Pratt. He is the first of our outstanding writers to be utterly distinct and different from the writers of other countries. Moreover, in its materialism, its insistence on the architectural and mechanistic view of life, its lack of sentimentality (in the best poems), indeed in that quality which

the aesthetes would have dubbed "Philistinism", his style reflects the true spirit and temper of Canada as a nation. And he stood at the brink of Canada's coming of age. His typical work appeared between the years 1926 and 1937. The fact that after the latter date he became oppressed with a sense of destiny and turned to themes outside his capabilities in no way detracts from the immense value of his mature period. Perhaps every great writer who is not cut off in his prime is destined, sooner or later, to become over ripe. The least that can be said for Pratt is that at his best he was unique, carved for himself a secure place among narative poets for many years to come. The most that could be said is that perhaps he will yet be recognized as one of the greatest, if not the greatest narrative poet of his generation in the English language.

The degree of Pratt's influence on the present generation of writers, the extent to which he contributed to the great flowering of literature which Canada enjoyed in the 1940's, will probably never be assessed. His influence, if it existed to the extent I suspect, was so indirect as to be almost impalpable. He has never had an imitator or a disciple. He founded no school and shaped no new approach to the problem of a distinctive Canadian culture. That new approach was discovered by a school of young writers — or rather by several distinct groups of young writers — all of whom came to public notice (if we can count as public notice the minute audience which avant-garde writing attracts) in the early 40's. There is a great richness of diversity in their styles, and it is to the survivors from this period that we must look for the fashioning of a literature which is neither an imitation of foreign models nor the result of a freak genius — a lone flowering in the waste.

Perhaps we shall look in vain, for along with their obvious virtues their faults lay thick as dust. Not the least of their faults was the brevity of their artistic lives. Either they could not endure critical neglect, or they were lulled into slumber by the cradle song of uncritical praise. Or perhaps they were developing a style so narrow in its artistic implications that its limits were soon explored. Or again, they may have been incapable of development beyond the stage of juvenile exuberance. The reasons were probably not the same in all cases, though one reason would be common to all — the discouragement which must have assailed most sensitive persons when the war was won and the peace was destroyed all in the same mad moment of history. Political disillusionment is a powerful force. Most of the young writers were socialists of various colours. And

they sensed, after their first passion for reforming the world had spent itself, that socialism was not coming to Canada in the foreseeable future. This tendency to be ephemeral was only one fault. Others were intellectualism at the expense of emotion, and a habit of using rather clotted symbolism at the expense of the image. Two notable exceptions to this were Raymond Souster and Irving Layton, both of whom, however, achieved a very limited range. Again, none of these charges could be leveled against Earle Birney's *David*, which, indeed, has so many technical perfections added to its heroic conception that it stands considerably above any other Canadian poem of the decade.

We have not yet catalogued all the serious faults of our younger generation of poets : being out of its depth is almost a convention of modern Canadian poetry — not only of the lesser lights such as Louis Dudek (e. g., *O Contemporaries* with its magnificent and stately opening and its atrocious conclusion in a welter of truisms) but also of the "masters." No one was ever more out of his depth than E. J. Pratt when he tackled the Brébeuf theme, or A. M. Klein when he chose the Hitler regime as a subject for satire. The latter was all the more deplorable because it almost succeeded, like an interrupted action that builds up for a climax but doesn't quite come off. It may be said that lack of satire, hand in hand with lack of honest criticism, is one of the failings of Canadian authorship. There has, it is true, been the occasional bit of delightful doggerel like F. R. Scott's "The Canadian Authors Meet," but such bits are painfully scarce. It is unfortunate that Klein failed to embody in verse the same degree of penetrating and critical wit that went into his *Annotation to Shapiro's Essay on Rime* and other critical reviews. L. A. MacKay has created some good satire in his *Ill-Tempered Lover and Other Poems*, but it is a bit too intellectual, too much of the rapier and not enough of the shillelagh, either to crack heads as effectively, or to be as boisterously funny as one would wish. Like the *Hitleriad* of Klein it approaches the ponderous satire of Dryden rather than the dexterous and brutally effective satire of Byron.

Another fault is self-consciousness, and self-conscious Canadianism. Few of the young writers could forget their possible audiences even for a moment. It is only natural for a socially conscious young poet to have a slightly messianic twist, but these carried it further than necessary, exemplifying Belloc's :

> The world's a stage — and I'm the Super man,
> And no one seems responsible for salary.

I roar my part as loudly as I can
And all I mouth I mouth it to the gallery.

In fact, as was the case with Belloc himself, the cup of art often slopped over with the wine of propaganda. Self-conscious Canadianism would not be so grievous did it not usually develop into a form of pseudo-Canadianism in which it is made offensively clear that action is set in Canada, when such action might equally well belong to any part of the civilized world. It is a form of "painting the native maple", a shallow sort of nationalism which ignores the basic meaning of Canada — a new temper and spirit, a mood compounded of sun and ice, our own special struggle to live and the materialism growing out of it. Poetry of this pseudo-Canadian sort often impressed one as having been prefabricated in America or England, and assembled by an amateur with "made in Canada" stamped all over it. Pratt's *Brébeuf* is an example of almost everything that is bad in Canadian poetry — it is pretentious, it is as pseudo-Canadian as Grey Wolf and Jack Miner's geese, it lacks spontaneity, and it achieved, on a lesser scale, the same sort of vulgar popularity that greeted *John Brown's Body* in the U.S.A. The *Preview* group suffered from England and the *Direction* group suffered from America. Those of them who still deserve serious consideration have failed to cut the apron strings of their literary mothers.

P. K. Page, A. M. Klein, Patrick Anderson and James Reaney, a late comer, may be counted among the survivors from the 40's. Page, Klein and Reaney are still drastically under the influence of English writers. Miss Page, superficially the most arresting of the four, but suffering from a lack of word music plus a confusion of philosophy and shallowness of penetration, has grown further away from the pernicious Audenesque influence than most of her contemporaries. Her weakness is more in the material presented than in the technique. The opposite is true of Klein. He is a writer who has interested me for some years past, not only as a poet, but also as a journalist. My conclusion, for what it is worth, is that by nature he is not a poet at all. He says little that could not be said as well in didactic prose — a medium in which he excels. In verse he lacks the verbal dexterity of Page and the music of Anderson. In fact, though I hesitate to use the word, he tends at times to be clumsy, and has an unfortunate habit of inserting in his poetry words for which one suspects he has ransacked a dictionary. Simplicity of language is not necessarily a virtue of learned prose, but it is a virtual necessity in a lyric. If Klein could develop a style to equal his conceptions, then

he might well challenge Pratt's position as the greatest Canadian poet to date. Unfortunately his development towards a simple yet forceful style, although noticeable, is noticeably slow.

James Reaney is young and in process of rapid flux. One cannot yet predict what his eventual place in Canadian letters is likely to be. He has at least the great virtue of clarity. No one need be in doubt as to what he means. His symbols are few and precise, and he possesses neatness and orderliness of thought. After reading the deliberately obscure young moderns and working like the devil to follow their eccentric patterns of thought, it is as good as a dose of Bromo-Seltzer to turn to Reaney and give the brain a rest. His weakness, like that of Page, lies mainly in his philosophical outlook, which is embryonic in the extreme. Despite this shortcoming he may develop into an important poet if he has the good sense to heed well meant criticism and to correct a trend toward eclectic sentimentality which manifested itself in *The Red Heart and Other Poems.*

Patrick Anderson I cannot competently discuss, because his deeper significance escapes me. His white centre is a spot I have never visited. The meaning behind his involved imagery of contrasts is a meaning to which I have not penetrated. But I have my suspicions. I suspect that Anderson's better poetry is really to be found in comparatively simple pieces like *Summer's Joe, Camp,* and *Song from a Play,* which, however many mysterious levels of meaning may be intended, have a direct appeal on their most obvious level. I have been told that Anderson is supposed to be a Marxist poet. If so, one would never suspect it. It is a Marxism of such a distilled, or perhaps rarefied, nature as to be entirely safe from any suspicion of un-Americanism.

There are, of course, others who deserve consideration : F. R. Scott and Dorothy Livesay (among the more traditional), A. A. Brown, anchored in a romantic backwater, but doing a creditable job with limited talent, Ralph Gustafson, who is a bad poet but a good fiction writer, Louis Dudek, to mention only a few. And there are interesting young poets just now appearing, whom we must leave, along with the vigourous school of Canadian novelists and short story writers for consideration another time. It would require a small book to examine, even briefly, the talents of all of them, and of the whole of that literary brotherhood which, during the early 40's flourished like the gourd of Jonah and was cut down in a night. Standing now beyond the end of that fruitful decade we must confess that Canadian poetry is in a bad way, though it is not yet time for MacKay to erect his tombstone over its grave.

NEUFVILLE SHAW

WINDOW

Through a window, a girl's smile.

Beyond the hill, cows make
The coming night moist and loud with noise.
The phoebe sings, cutting the evening
With the sound of knife's whetting.
The robin is liquid, a bottle gurgling,
And I see the purple meadow
Turn to the grey of evening mice —
All these are usual.

Neither time nor the sun hurting,
Neither the wild orchard of dust behind a car,
Nor the children flowering the forest,
Nor the farmer stamping his name
Upon his land
Are what I mean.
All these are right and similar, expendable and expectable.
They sound and are,
Are seen and see. Their scent
Is garland for the golden girl
Who disturbs a window's black,
The sunflower tremble
That shakes a world.

Raise No Memorial

William McConnell

(RAISE NO MEMORIAL *is the final chapter of an unpublished war novelette of the same name.)*

O'Connor thought that the grey symptoms of dawn, the woollen-tipped waves, the salt-smell and tar reek, were part of an earlier life. And later, while huddled under his equipment, eyes bleak to the widening skyline, he fought for the control such a conception should give. Charmon on his right was being miserably sick. Rutter, good old Rutter of poker skill, was determinedly feigning sleep, the better to substantiate one of his later yarns, skillfully prepared and buttered in advance of telling. The L.C.T. an older British model, much used in months of practice landings, yawed in a sudden side-trough, like some huge sea-sick donkey. O'Connor forgot his desperate analysis long enough to gaze back to the control cockpit with sudden fright to see if the coxwain was still at his post.

"Thank God there ain't a gale blowing," someone said behind him.

And a raucous, brutal group laugh, "Whaddja call this, a trip in your old lady's washing machine?"

The first voice persisted with a growl. "It's rough. But it ain't a gale. Ask a Maratimer. That's what I am."

O'Connor wondered with vagueness why and how men persisted in these futile arguments at such a time as this. For three years he had been hearing them, on parade, in barracks, over beer, during mess, after 'lights out', in the showers. They never stopped. He felt like laughing but suppressed the slightly hysterical bubble of sound forming in his rolling belly. Mr. Fox, their platoon commander, came crouching by with the boat skipper, a young red-faced Yank, both very important, and obviously the kind to kill themselves and everyone else if necessary to prove it. They stopped opposite him and discussed the 'lay'.

He wanted to stand up and peer over the plate-side. It had

been strictly forbidden in manoeuvres and last-minute instructions. He could hear, or imagined, the roar of engines off their bow. But perhaps it was the curling of wind to his ear-drums. They must be three-quarters of the way across now. They had started at one and were due in at five. He regretted that this wasn't the main wave of Canadians. Their position had been explained as liaison company to the Americans who were landing at Omaha Beach. Now there was good psychological preparation, he thought, with a wry smile. Trust the Americans. Instead of numbering their objectives they personified them with identifiable and homely place names. Now why the devil couldn't their staff name their Beach say, 'Winnipeg Beach'? Instead of 'A14 Green'. O'Connor realised if they were to be alive when they landed the beaches should be in secure hands. This was a Headquarters unit, signallers, runners, self-sustaining. His mortar was part of the sustaining. He ached to be ashore and busy at what he knew best. It was the waiting.

What did the others feel like? He thought he had known them. He had studied them, sketched them for months, talked, played, argued, trained, slept with, talked with in confidence, borrowed money, stood treat, advised on marital relations, shared intimacies of former years in hallowed strident laughter. Comrades.

Now personalities revealed by odd ways in hitching packs, securing same-coloured webbing. Cold as the smell of bilge.

One turned as far as he was able on the close-packed bench seats. He split a freckled face in two. "It's your breath or the weather, Irish. But something sure as hell stinks around here."

O'Connor, warmed by the good humoured insult, jocularly pointed to Charmon, who now had his head cradled in his arms. "Baby here wet his bib!" He could hear the ripple of laughter spread along the row in front. Dead backs became live friends, a line to group resistance. A little of his apprehensive fear was shed as he grabbed hold. Most of that which remained was nervous tautness. This he tried to discipline.

The wind had now died down. And with it most of the violent side-sweep wave-skidding of the L.C.T. Voices were much clearer. And it was lighter, too. That made you feel better. Light enough to see quite a distance in the only direction sight could be directed out of the vessel from their position — upwards. Heads began to crane. Voices took on new speculation. They knew with light that danger was stronger. Darkness was a heavy unpleasant blanket, but it shielded them from the skies. This new activity brought cheerful-

ness, though its accompaniment was added danger. O'Connor, too, looked up, trying to pierce the low scudding clouds, to serrate their formations into a message or portent of their next half hour.

Then it came. The men on look-out saw first. O'Connor's intimation was the sudden shrill crackle of their heavy machine guns. He stretched his neck around surprised and saw them twisting the heavy body braces in a sky-pointing parabola. Used jackets spouted from its side, giving the astonishing illusion that the range of the gun was several feet. O'Connor's head swung up further, instinctively following the muzzle. A speck became a plane. A plane became a diving monstrosity. Several hundred feet, or a thousand, it pulled out sharply. An instant illusion of relief. A speck detached, like fly dirt, became the semblance of a bomb, metamorphosing from an object into sudden terror. Eyes followed head in a ducking movement to arms, and a drilling of spine into splintery seat. Instinct prompted diving to the steel deck. Other sprawled bodies countermanded it.

The explosion came quicker than one would imagine. Thrump and a geyser of water half swamping the lurching boat. Thrips of water drove through the air like rifle bullets, whining and spitting; the percentage which splattered against the hull splintered their particles with the sound of crackling glass. The ship seemed to heave a sigh of relief, straightened from the crazy course of bomb evasion and shrugged herself back into a true course with the phlegm of a disgruntled market woman nearly upset by a ludicrous automobile. O'Connor brought up his head to notice that the 50-calibre machine-guns were still swivelling and clattering, spewing spent jackets corruptly into the gunwales. He saw the coxwain point excitedly to the left. Both machine-guns swivelled madly in that direction. Their chorus became synchronized into a mad clattering roar. The L.C.T.'s sides prevented their seeing the new target. Then they suddenly became the target themselves, a slug-wining infested receptacle for death. There was no time to duck, to crawl deeper for shelter, to do anything but stare, gripped to immobility by large paving blocks in one's gut, watching saw-toothed ricocheting splatters rip and bounce from steel into steel, into wood into steel, off again and into stuffed sacks of inert bodies which completed the short line of trajectory. Shadow of hell zoomed overhead with a greater roar, then silence.

O'Connor stared stupidly and criminally at his ring finger. A nickel-jacketed particle had broken the ring head and it half dangled from the scarce-restraining finger flesh. No blood.

Blood in front, below, sogging into his arm from the wet thing which had been the sea-sick Charmon, now drooping despondently against the restraining arms of his next seat-companion, a futile heart killing itself in its final pumping effort. The one with the enveloping arms had his steel helmet firmly locked on his head by a tattoo of steel blows and couldn't witness his useless effort of mercy. His curses were strident and unaffected by imagination. O'Connor knocked the helmet free with a slashing backhand blow. Charmon's arms fell and were still and he slacked off onto the deck, to join a dozen. O'Connor saw smoke rising from his battledress, foolishly raised his voice to shout fire, then mumbled, "Explosive bullets." Lovely things to rip your insides out.

Immediate discipline leashed in tongues and actions. Lieutenant Fox was shouting orders. Half a dozen men from up forward were dragging the dead and injured from between the feet of their comrades and clumsily, with futile tenderness, were carrying them aft. O'Connor had time to think ruefully, "Complete air cover. Complete air cover, the lovely bastards. That's what they call complete air cover." And felt lost and alone and hideously deserted.

Till discipline clinched his responses. Word was passed along, "Secure packs and check equipment." He fumbled and was cursed by his Corporal. The comforting jar to ego immediately conquered panic. Movements and thoughts became automatic.

The American ensign coolly appraised the littered sea ahead of him. Tide was wrong. Tides had been gauged for the first wave. Ugly snouts of snaring piles leaped out of the shallows two hundred yards ahead. His heart lurched as he saw Number Two on the portside mushroom into an explosion. Mines. That would be chance. The concrete and piling looked like some huge smelling maw of giant's mouth with rotten stumps of death. He needed decision immediately. His helmsman was waiting for his signals. The surf would stop directed progress if speed were dropped. Ten knots was needed, at least, to drive this lumbering inert s.o.b. far enough onto the beach to get cargo up safely. He signed for increased revolutions, hopefully gave signals to his rating at the wheel. Very young, very arrogant, he clenched his fists and then, glancing down, unclenched them. Ahead he saw the spouts of shell bursts, gushing mud and sand and water in the shallow area they were bracketing. 'Fixed batteries," he numbly thought. 'Observers spotted us coming in. And *that*, my lad, must be the only clear channel.' With coolness he directed the ploughing craft towards the nest of threshing bursts. He

clenched his fists again, this time too absorbed to remember an appraising glance. He signalled for more speed. He drove in rapidly, turned completely about in the craft's length to avoid a half submerged "Duck", its jagged steel a perfect reef for their bottom, realigned on his shore site and drove in again. The L.C.T. bucked and reared, fought her control, spun high, slipped sideways, contending the thrashing of surf and high-explosive burst. Shrapnel thrummed against the high metal sides. A wide burst spread through the air towards the control cockpit and cut the helmsman in two, the trunk sagging to belated safety behind the waist-high shield. The Ensign leaped to the revolving wheel in time to swing the barge in to shore again. Several times they grated sand. He glanced forward and saw the military were ready, thought, 'Well, it's their turn now. God! What a craft to take a trip like this in!' The long curving bottom grated again, rolled forward on wave-crest, nuzzled sideways against a short sunken pile wired for trip explosion, puffed away miraculously, slewed half-sideways on bottom and was suddenly beached in her two feet of draught. The front dropped down and his cargo were leaping into oily water, rifles high like some farcical attempt at the mock-surrender practised in training. Machine guns awoke on the hill beyond. Mortars thrumped down their welcome. Land mines, buried at low tide, hurled the unlucky high above water, and deposited them again as quickly, and in segments, divided by the chance of blast deflection.

The wave of men hit the beachhead and won brief protection. This was a strip of beach — twenty yards at most — so steep that it offered safety. In a short time there was clinging to it an astounding miscellany of troops. O'Connor was astonished at their number. He didn't know that the first, second and third waves, as well as their own landing group, were all gathered here. He found himself in a hodgepodge of Americans and Canadians — engineers, Rangers, infantry, feverishly busy Medical Corpsmen, signallers, M.D.'s. Just beyond, the Germans were on high ground, their pillboxes and strongpointed farm buildings directly controlling the beach.

Two hours of directing and being directed, when any man was in command at any particular moment, qualifications shaded by momentary knowledge of where to aim a rifle, direct a mortar burst or suddenly decide the need for Bangalore torpedoes. O'Connor fought with all weapons at hand. His mortar team had been hopelessly lost in the general mêlee. Once he had fallen under a wiry face-blackened Ranger Sergeant who found time between burst of

automatic fire, of crawling, ducking, yelling and ordering, to mimic him in what he considered to be an English accent, horrible amusing travesty of radio comedian and George Arliss. It was an injection of comedy which temporarily shifted breathless activity into low relief and caused O'Connor to be able to make self-observations without losing contact with his important game of survival. And then suddenly confusion and fighting and noise were arrested. He became conscious of what had transpired, that it was noon day and that they — himself and a dozen others — were in a wooded gulch a mile or two inland with no opposition within sight.

Not all died. Most lived. Viewed perhaps from some overhead vantage point, perhaps one of the Command strongpoints on the hills beyond, perhaps by some Oberofficer, or even an impressed six-pfenning a day soldier licking his dry lips with fear saliva, the success of this sustained wave of battledressed automatons must have appeared divinely approved, with each individual figure stepping, running, shouting, being blown to bits, miraculously dodging trip mine, shower of scrap iron or lethal commas, semi-colons and full stops of machine gun slugs.

In the Bay not one L.C.T. but dozens were coming in — two punctured and quickly demolished by accurate 88mm fire, one somehow inflated to a bag of flames and spouting smoke, three clumsily twisted to shallow-water hazards by cunning wooden piles, steel frames and concrete pedestals, but the rest depositing their quotas in knee deep off-shore water.

These sank their chins into chests, forgot their common role in its attainment, ran through the water, stumbling in tide holes, sludging their soaked legs through the clinging weed of sea-water, noticing fearfully and furtively the antics of other figures on both sides, dimly attempting to remember the instructions which were really part of every motion, cursing the swinging and restricting respirator, packs, and even the weapons, held shoulder high, dimly hearing and obeying the shouted orders which equally busy, equally individual officers and N.C.O.'s were shouting every time they could catch a command which discipline insisted should be passed along.

O'Connor, struggling as the rest, caught himself wondering as to the stupidity which the Germans displayed in strapping Teller Mines with their flat disc shapes to the top of man-high piling, not realising that tides, too, were fortuitous in destiny.

And now once more he was with men of his own company, or at least the majority were comrades, with two Americans taking

the lead in flopping down in the dead bracken, lifting canteens to bleached lips, wiping grimy faces with dirtier sleeves and achieving the maximum in sprawling that cramped aching bodies would allow. There was sharp weariness, but also the urge to talk; words had been subdued by action for tight-packed hours. They had drifted into the sheltering gulch from different directions, the natural dip in the terrain having attracted their legs with an elementary logic.

There was a summing up, incomplete, larded with rumour and conjecture, but gradually all received some general idea of what had occurred, filling the blankness which had been worrying, even in the thickest of the fighting.

Casualties had been heavy in the first waves for a very elementary reason. After consolidation on the beach an attempt had been made to storm the wooded hills. Minefields had channeled off the attack into carefully determined lines of fire. When the attack had failed the Beach Commander had laid down a thick mortar barrage on the enemy positions. Then had begun the second abortive storming, this time with an attempt at circling the German positions. Liaison was poor with the flanks, chiefly because the fighting was so fluid in the sector. Losses were even heavier in this second attempt. What had been in the manuals for years, but forgotten through disuse, had been effected by the enemy. Their major positions were on reverse slopes. The mortar shelling had merely smashed the forward posts. It wasn't till O'Connor's wave had come in that the staff had felt there was strength enough to tackle the job the third time with destroyers shelling off-shore as a solid preparation, for by this time communication had been properly established and ranges fixed.

O'Connor lay on his stomach, chewing on some American rations and listening to the low-voiced conversation. They found that the sharing of individual experience was an aid to their survival. Even in the month-long landing exercises they hadn't taken instructions seriously enough. They were lessons to be learned, to be memorised by insistent repetition, certainly not the vital fluid of information which this exchange of experiences seemed to every man.

He heard that the enemy had a distinct system, not only of artillery observation, but also for their mortars, with well-concealed posts, which also connected to machine gun nests and pillboxes. O'Connor mused carefully over this, remembering his original job as a component of a mortar crew. He wondered where the rest of his crew were now. A check of the faces in the semi-circle failed

to reveal one of his own platoon. Many of their early-morning casualties were simple things, such as ankle-sprains, rifles being discharged accidentally, getting in their own line of fire when advancing too unevenly.

It was obvious, from the various contributions, that they were three to four miles from tide-water, and an equal distance from the village they had been told was the first objective. An American remarked that tanks were soon coming up, that armour had already taken over the attack on the Canadian side. O'Connor and his fellow Canadians glanced eagerly at the speaker, and realised that they had been fighting apart from their own army. It gave them a peculiar feeling to hear someone mention their nationality as something distinct, slightly alien. And queerer still to realise that this was the first time they had even thought of being anything but a part of the unit to which they were attached. Gone quickly was their original role.

O'Connor wondered without effort if they would ever solidify events and position long enough to unscramble the Company. He wondered, too, if any of their officers or senior N.C.O.'s were left to do the unscrambling. He realised, even with his limited knowledge of events and organization behind the fighting, that co-operation on their right was good. Several times S.O.S. flares had brought down swooping R.A.F. planes to rocketblast strong-points out of existence. Still, even his limited knowledge forced him to realise that fighting had barely begun, that they were merely up against delaying tactics. He shook his tired head grimly when he tried to imagine how much more furious and intense the later fighting would be when the counter attack started.

And then an American Major came slipping and sliding down the grassy slope. He yelled orders as he tried to maintain his footing. "You, down there. Hey, com'on up! There's a wave of snipers got through, plugging at everything that passes on the road." The group jumped to their feet, began to scramble up towards the officer. "No, you damn fools! Not that way. Whatdja think I jumped down towards you for? Circle around!" He indicated the direction and still approached them. When he was close enough to identify faces he realised that the majority were Canadians. "Oh, Canucks, eh? You guys attached to us?" Several grinned a 'yessir' and left. O'Connor turned to follow them but the Major called him back, "There's a dugout about five hundred yards back of this point, and one hundred and fifty to the left. That's our Headquarters. Do yuh

think you could take a message back there? I've got no jurisdiction over you, of course. My runner was killed up on the road." The Major looked away. O'Connor glanced about to see if either of the two American infantrymen was in sight. Both had slithered off into the bushes, to play hide-and-seek with the snipers. O'Connor gave a quick salute. "Certainly, Sir." The Major sat down on the dry bracken and wrote quickly in his pocket book, tore out the leaves and addressed them with printed characters. He spoke as he was writing, "This merely summarises the position up ahead. But it's important. I've been half a mile forward. Except for these few snipers it's clear up to there. But there's a massing up around Vierville. That's where they're getting ready to push us back. I'm telling you this so's you can repeat it. It's in addition to what I wrote. Not according to the rule book but what the hell has been since we landed?" He flashed O'Connor a grin and began walking up the gulch, head hunched into shoulders like a dignified khaki turtle. O'Connor slung his rifle and took off in the opposite direction. As he neared the summit of the small valley he held the rifle at the ready as he advanced from tree to tree, keeping behind clumpbrush and greenery whenever it afforded cover.

He had approached the gulch from the opposite side. This was new territory to him. A few hundred feet was good going. Thick, heavy-smelling copse. Suddenly this ceased as open field broke. He stood, undecided, behind a thick oak, realising that he would have to cross the field to reach the road. The road was not in view, sunken, probably. But its border was marked by thick hedge growth which hid the embankment. He heard the dim crackle of small arms fire, either the sporadic burst of a light machine gun or several rifles crackling in unison. It was too far away to worry about. Behind him the woods and field were deathly still. The midday sun, now that he was poised before the open space, felt hotly intense. The ammoniac aroma of leaf mould seeped up to his nostrils, comforting in its familiarity. He leaned forward to give the field closer survey. A twig clacked near his head. He idly raised his eyes to see how it had been disturbed. It was a few inches above his head and had been clipped neatly, the white wood showing a clean break. With an oath he fell to his stomach, cursing his slow response. A silencer, of course! What did he expect? To have them announce everything with a megaphone? From where did it come? No time now to examine the break carefully. He was being stalked. Hackles rose. He squirmed backwards away from the field, into the protecting gloom of the trees.

He heard a 'pfft' and recoiled violently as a slug whizzed by his ear and buried itself in the leaf mould two feet ahead. The round black tunnel of its entrance mangled a family of ants which had been busily engineering the dead leaf. He was panic-stricken. The sniper was behind him. And high. High enough to draw a bead at such an angle. Luckily, too far away for much light. Possibly his hunter was guessing at location. What a fool he was! Wriggle away as quickly as possible. Naturally the hunter reasoned that he would flop and lie still. Careful not to disturb the brush at his side he bellied his way forward into the field and half-sunlight. The grass was head high and would offer better concealment. The brighter light was a disadvantage, though. Reaction to fear had set in. Training slip-knotted his terror. Ten yards in twenty minutes, each one an hour and each second of each minute his nerves and muscles tensed to reject the expected impact of lead into spine or shoulder or head. He lay steadily now, face kissing the damp grass roots, neck crawling with the myriad grass lice, the evil smell from their crushed greenness stenching his nostrils as if the black earth clutched by his fingers was retaliating with a persistent staling. He heard the whine of a bullet yards to his right. The sniper was firing blindly. Or thought he'd seen some movement. Relief at being temporarily secure. Then a long death wait began.

It seemed incredibly stupid after the first half hour. Lying there, not moving a muscle, controlling the excited reflexes, then clenching the cramp in arms and legs, easing it with counter-clench of tight opposing muscles. The sun hot and hard against the base of the skull, soon driving wooden pegs of pain into the brain. The sickening exhuding of crushed insects, their mates and brothers burrowing into clothing folds, entering seams and tickling skin in their march to their special land. A cunning stupid unknown somewhere, some several hundred yards in the gloom of the forest aching his eyes for a sudden move which would be target and release from a tree-bound vigil. And the noisy clamorous stillness which echoed every thought to a clang of danger.

Then suddenly, after an hour of inaction, of crepitating fear, the realising of his position. And duty. Ten minutes of careful searching of some way out of this stupid trap. He even managed a futile grin his subconscious sent up hopefully to counteract his dilemma. "The mail must go through." To which his aching nerves screamed with laughter while his antennae of control slapped and beat them down into slow submission.

Fear dominated training, urge to survival clubbed fear and channeled emotion into calculation. 'It is two hundred yards to that brush. Two hundred and two yards to the roadway. It would take me perhaps forty seconds the way my muscles are cramped. If I stay here till dusk no one will be the wiser. Then I can get out of this easily. Can even round up a few men and get that sniper in the woods. I could crawl. That would be suicide. The half-shadows of the trees end here. Beyond is complete nakedness with no shadows but my own which would give me away. That jerry is further back than I thought or he would have got me all three times he's shot. He won't come any closer for he doesn't know but that I've turned and am stalking him. He's probably tied himself in that tree, anyway. And he doesn't know if there's any of my friends behind me. He'll sit tight till darkness, too. But I promised to get the message through. To hell with melodrama, I gave my word. Anyway it's stupid playing this game. I've dodged about two thousand bullets today and not even a graze. All of them thicker-spread than anything this guy can throw. But he's got one target, special sights, and trained eyes and finger. I could crouch-run and get some protection but it would take longer to cover the distance. Stand-run would be faster and easier on my muscles. The first twenty yards I'll run in a straight line. It'll take him that long to line me up. Then I'll dodge to the left. If he's right-handed — and all the odds are that way — he'll allow for a right-dodge. By the time he corrects I'll dodge the same way slightly and keep it up. Which will put on about twenty yards to the race course. Each time I dodge he'll think it's the last to the left and the next move will be right. Like good poker bluff. It's worked in poker. Hope to God he's not a poker bluffer, too, or he'll catch on the third or fourth time I jump out of his sights.'

O'Connor flicked his muscles as does a cat when prepared to spring. Suddenly, his rehearsed plan controlling, he leaped to his feet and raced through the grass. Though he'd decided to run erect the strain of preparing for the blow in the back caused his shoulders to hunch and his head to drop forward. It was the run of a desperate end-play. His eyes to the ground, slightly forward to watch for furrow declivities, marked off the impersonal yards, while his lips counted off strides. Twenty. He threw himself sideways, nearly lost balance, plunged on. Nothing. He counted ten, lurched left again, feeling as he did the stinging ear-buzz of the by-passing lead. The thought flashed that he was up against a skilled man. He was aiming

for his head, when he had the wider target of back. Ten steps this time, then left lurch, wider than he intended. His ankle slipped and he fell, but the piston strokes of legs brought him upright. This involuntary movement saved his body from the second shot. Wildly he realised that he was racing too far to the left and was almost paralleling the hedgerow. He straightened his course and galloped on. There was in irresistible desire to look back over his shoulder. He fought it. It became uncontrollable. His head sprang upright. His neck twisted. His eyes didn't see. They were blinded by perspiration fog. His head still in that position, he suddenly catapulted into the thorns of the hedgerow, his turning face taking the brambles and slashing boughs. He attempted to dive head first into the thickly laced foliage. Its tight network thrust his body back. He flopped to his knees and attempted to burrow. His arms caught a small opening in the entanglement and prised it wider. He thrust himself in and whined from the scratches and scrapings the thorns inflicted. A sudden higher whine, almost a scream, as he felt the slicing hammer blow of metal as it struck his outstretched arm. He burrowed faster, felt his uniform tearing and rasping, and was deposited down the opposite grassy bank into the roadside ditch. He lay, panted, then cried spasmodically, lightly, like a scolded child, in the same grotesque spreadeagle as when he had landed.

Two American soldiers in a jeep careened around the sharp corner. They passed the khaki-bundle, screeched their brakes and U-turned their foreshortened vehicle. They jerked O'Connor to his feet, slugged his mouth with cold water and slapped his face till colour came back. They were hard, incisive M.P.'s patrolling the sidelines of war.

"Where yuh goin', Johnny?"

O'Connor thanked them. "Where can I find this place? It's supposed to be a short distance from here."

The American PFC read the outer address. Even his reading appeared brisk. "Hell, that's our Divisional C.P. It's moved a dozen times today. It's back half a mile. Straight down this road. Where didja get this?"

O'Connor was now angry. "One of your Majors gave it to me to deliver. And I'm delivering it."

"Okay, okay, don't get your tongue in a knot. We gotta check up, that's all. Our little fightin' boys don't always turn out to be Americans or Canucks. You oughta know that by now."

O'Connor described the Major. Both M.P.'s stared at each

other. "Holy Joe, that's Charming Cuthbert, alright alright. He's bin missing since noon. Com'on Canuck, we'll give you a lift right where you wanta go. Hop in!"

"But what about the sniper?"

"The what?"

"The sniper who was potting at me. Back in the woods there. On the other side of the field."

"Sniper! Gawd, man. Where?"

O'Connor laughed hysterically. The two M.P.'s waited till he regained control of himself, then listened to his story. One immediately grabbed his arm and slit the sleeve with his sheath knife. "You got quite a nick there, Bud. Here, swing around this way so's I can git a grip on it. Swallow these sulfa pills. Why don't you learn to look after yourself?" He was clucking concern, the mock-toughness disappearing under his nimble fingers and chattering tongue. He made O'Connor slide the choking mouthful of pills down his swollen throat, then bandaged the wound, which was now free-flowing. He waved to his partner. "Jim, you amble down the road a ways, pick up the first men you come to and clean up on the kraut. I'm taking Johnny here back to the C.P."

The Command Post was formerly a German dugout. Probably it had served the same purpose for them earlier in the day. Three grey uniformed corpses lay placidly in the sun, near the entrance. Two infantrymen, automatic rifles cradled in their arms, stopped the M.P. and O'Connor. There was alert truculence in their faces, and fingers were inside trigger guards. The M.P. motioned to O'Connor. "Taking this one in with information for the Staff."

One of the guards, eyes swollen with tiredness, giving him the bilious look of some tired weekend reveler, moved his mouth cautiously, spitting his words with deliberate shortness, "Yeah? Suppose you give it right here?"

The M.P. turned to O'Connor, twisted his face into a grimace, "An' you thought I was suspicious of you, eh?"

The two sentries waited patiently. Then one said, "Com'on, com'on, this is the best little information bureau this side of the channel. Where's your papers, both of you. Make it fast, now."

The M.P. sighed and drew out his identity card. Indicating O'Connor he said, "This one is a Northern neighbour. He ain't got our little souvenirs."

An officer appeared out of the low entrance, straightening and yawning into the overhead sun with the same motion. He saw them.

"What goes?"

The sentries repeated the occurrence in monosyllables, as if an extra word weighed too much for the tongue.

The M.P. threw in his story from the beginning. He reached out to O'Connor. "Show him the paper, Johnny."

O'Connor was dead tired. No longer did he feel the role of a wounded hero. Everything seemed to be such a worry and bother, with red tape even in the forward area. He wanted to laugh in their faces and tell them that the whole thing was an accident. He happened to be the last man in the gulch so he got stuck with this job, which no one really seemed to be very interested in. He wanted to be back at his work, with his own men. Back stalking, instead of being stalked. First by a tree-borne sniper and now by this rigmarole of argument and persuasion. He shook his head slowly and spread his legs wider to gain support for his knotting legs. He said, "There's a verbal message, too, Sir. I want to be sure it reaches the right man."

The M.P. began to get angry. "Look, here. This man's wounded. Does he have to stand around here all day shootin' the breeze? He's not even in our outfit and if I know anything, didn't have to do this job. What about it, Sir?"

The officer glanced at the speaker, stared intently at O'Connor, spoke to the sentry. "Take his rifle, Melinsky. Thanks, that will be all." The M.P. saluted hazily and strode off to his jeep. "Here, you come with me." This last to O'Connor.

Inside the small dark cavern, lined with bunks, strewn with castoff enemy equipment and ends of clothing, O'Connor was brought before a packing-case desk. He was jostled roughly by hurrying figures, attempting to squeeze by the narrow aisle to a larger dugout beyond. When his eyes became accustomed to the gloom he noticed the small man seated in front of him, staring intently at a map. The accompanying officer was now businesslike. "Here's a man with a message from Major Cuthbert, G2. It's in your line, I think."

The grey eyes leaped up from the map, rested on O'Connor. "I'll take it. Where the devil did Cuthbert get to? No business wandering around the countryside. This isn't a sightseeing tour. Who's this man?"

The officer explained the story, carefully, leaving no detail to chance. He asked O'Connor to confirm it. O'Connor nodded his head, once again feeling the escape valve of patience clog with resentment.

The grey eyes danced up again. "Wounded, you say? Grab that box for him to sit on. Sit down, lad. Why the hell didn't you say so when you came in?"

O'Connor handed over the message, still with its original folds. "The Major gave me verbal confirmation, Sir." Grey eyes were devouring the paper. "What is it?"

O'Connor repeated the instructions. Grey eyes danced up to him again, held his own. "Repeat the exact circumstances under which this information was given you. Particularly, what time of the day was it?"

O'Connor tiredly replied, again dispirited.

"Oh, too bad you couldn't have brought it in sooner. However, air-support radioed the information about the same time. We appreciate your action. Where's your outfit?"

O'Connor told him.

"Oh, Liaison, eh? You've got out of your territory. That's the next sector over. They're away ahead of us in that direction. Your tanks have raced through. Well, Wilson, we better get this man to the aid post, then back to his people. You take him yourself, at least as far as the 67th Headquarters. They'll know where to place him. I'll have them phone over. By the way, mention the circumstances." Grey eyes flickered back to the map and became instantly absorbed.

"This way. We'll get that arm fixed up now, Son."

O'Connor felt furious resentment at the address. The Captain was his own age, perhaps younger. His mouth felt dry and powdery from the sulfa pills. His head was pounding. The voice at his elbow, guiding him up the stairs to sunlight was suddenly concerned. "You want to lie down for awhile. I can get an M.O. up here for you."

O'Connor shook his head and plodded up the last steps. A jeep, omnipresent, piloted by a tobacco-chewing negro, steel helmet set at a rakish angle, drove them away from the Command Post at a fast clip.

O'Connor leaned back as far as the pain would allow. He realised now that it wasn't merely a surface wound. The pain seemed to be constricting his heart. He dimly sensed, without caring, that it was shock creeping into his system. He was husked by weariness. The day's events passed through his mind, some active mental agent attempting to screen out impressions which would fit his vivid preimaginings. Suddenly he wanted dive-bombing, exploding shells, a squadron of Tiger tanks to come careening down the road towards

the racing bouncing jeep. Anything to give logic and meaning to his wound. He felt cheated and a cheater and he was sick with hopeless knowledge of fraud. Enveloping shock caused tiredness so acute that the bouncing didn't wake him the third time his head fell forward on his chest.

And asleep he was when two tanks did materialise, crushing the hedgerow carelessly as they waddled briefly over the side-ditch to block the road completely, stopping in neanderthal ponderousness, swinging their turreted cannon as they fired in unison. Their shells picked up the light jeep with its three occupants, twisted it in black smoke and hurling debris; then they geared forward to crunch the falling wreckage with the callousness of plated machinery.

PLEASE NOTE

Mr. Shaun Herron, the editor of *The British Weekly*, has asked us to bring his publication to the attention of Canadian writers. He writes in part : "I am looking for verse and short fiction with an unmistakable "made in Canada" sign on it. By short fiction I mean stories of not more than 3000 words and preferably around 2000... The fees I can offer are small and the currency exchange will make them smaller ; but 80,000 readers may compensate for that ?" The address of *The British Weekly*, is 11 Buckingham St., Adelphi, London W. C. 2, England.

Film

Belle Pomer

RECENT CANADIAN FILMS

Not so long ago, the small, indignant group that cried out for encouragement of the arts in Canada went unheard. Now our collective heart has softened, but the present practice of praising all things Canadian, like a doting mother her infant's every new sound, is hardly an improvement. The mother had better temper her blind praise with a little discriminating guidance, or the child, when grown, will be unable to hold his own with his contemporaries.

The work of the National Film Board might be cited as a case in point. The NFB has produced some fine pieces of work which deserve all the praise they have received. But it comes as a distinct shock, after the numerous bouquets thrown to the NFB for its general high level of work, to find that many of its productions are needlessly awkward and amateurish.

Take, for example, the little film *Date of Birth*, which presents the problem of older men seeking employment and finding themselves rejected because of their age. The first shot shows the screen covered with a haphazard but pleasing arrangement of employment application forms. Then the camera cuts to the title and credits, which are photographed against a plain white ground of blurred uneven texture, like the home-made title with which your neighbour two doors down precedes his own moving pictures of last summer's vacation. Surely it would have been simple, inexpensive, and effective to have presented the title and credits against the background of application forms which was flashed on the screen to begin with. Here, for once, it would have done no harm to look to Hollywood, where even the poorest film is provided with an adroit and interesting introduction.

The film proceeds using the conventional technique for its type — background narration — but makes the mistake of inserting a little family scene with dialogue. Though there is nothing quite so convincing in documentary as the faces of non-actors, this realistic effect, except on rare occasions of which *Date of Birth* is not one, lasts only until the non-actor is given something to say. Had the script-writer been aware of this, the self-conscious, sing-song dialogue might have been avoided, and narration continued in its place. Such flaws may seem minor, but they are not unimportant: they make

the difference between a finished, professional production and an amateurish piece of work.

But it is in the field of the Canadian commercial film that there is real cause for discouragement. In fact, if *Forbidden Journey* were an American film, we would waste no words on it; since it is the most recent of the few full-length fiction films which have been produced here, it is perhaps worth commenting, for those who are interested in the development of film art in Canada, on the reasons for its failure.

Just how much have we a right to expect from our first full-length creative films? Although it is true that our film-makers lack experience, the art of the film is not itself young and undeveloped — there is the best work of England, France, Italy, Sweden and the U.S.A. to be studied and profited from during the period of apprenticeship. What a waste, then, that the men who made *Forbidden Journey* chose instead to pattern their production after the Hollywood "B" picture.

The subject-matter is no less unfortunate, and the plot structure is so flimsy that it falls apart at the merest touch. The hero, a stowaway from one of the European countries behind the 'Iron Curtain' has entered Canada illegally in order to deliver to his uncle, a professor of architecture at the university, an important message concerning an underground movement which helps people to escape to Canada. Stalking the hero in his search are Communist agents in Montreal. They are anxious to find out the content of the message and the person for whom it is intended before killing the hero and the man he is trying to contact. It seems hardly credible that a young man eluding such dangerous pursuers should draw attention to himself in a night club by picking up and strumming an instrument, but it is in this improbable though sadly familiar manner that the writers have chosen to introduce the love interest of the film. And it is less credible, and highly ridiculous into the bargain, to find at the end of the film that the hero has chased all over town, and exposed his uncle to danger which results in his death, merely to convey in person a message which could as efficiently and with safety have been given over the telephone, and which, in any case, is hardly a message at all. Since the writer was unable to invent a communication which would justify the danger of the chase, he might have transferred to the message some of the secrecy which so generously shrouded almost everything else in the film.

Film-making is a co-operative art, and the better the film, the

more difficult it is for the layman to distinguish the work of the various contributors. In this case, however, the largest share of the blame falls conspicuously on the writer and director, not only because of a poor plot and two-dimensional characterization, but because the picture was obviously not conceived in terms of the film at all. Far too much information is given by the narrator, instead of being visually presented. The narration repeatedly bridges completely separate incidents, and is used as a substitute for film technique in creating a mood or conveying an impression. Whenever the camera takes over and achieves an effect by itself, narration is nevertheless superimposed. Towards the end the narration leaves off, but here the dialogue, particularly drawn-out in the death scene and the anti-climactic scene between hero and heroine which follows, weighs down the action of the film. Obviously the production is first of all a story, only secondly a film, and its crude transference to the screen reveals complete lack of feeling for the medium of the film.

As a result of this basic inability to think cinematically, *Forbidden Journey* does not even succeed as the action film for which it was intended. For along with the static film technique, the picture has retained the literary idiom in a stilted narrative, and dialogue which was written to be read, not spoken.

There are a few small items to be chalked up on the favourable side. For one thing, the camera's presentation of the Montreal scene has dramatic quality and distinction. And if the music is obtrusive and superfluous in the early part of the film, we are later compensated by the hero's song in the calèche, without accompaniment. Finally, the chase itself, divorced of its *raison d'être*, is effectively presented up to the point of the climax. However, none of these makes a very great dent in the film's essential failure.

We are aware, of course, that the cost of film-making, on however economical a scale, is so expensive that the most generous and high-minded backer cannot afford a failure from the box-office point of view. But *Forbidden Journey* suggests that the producers, making the mistake prevalent in the film industry of this continent, that of underestimating the audience, are under the delusion that a good creative film and a commercial success are at opposite ends of the pocketbook. Shakespeare had, after all, to please the audience in the pit as well as the lords and ladies of the court; and it might be worth drawing to the attention of Selkirk Productions that a good film, too, can be a box-office success.

The Past Decade in Canadian Poetry

John Sutherland

The present is an appropriate time to conduct a survey of recent Canadian poetry, since the end of 1950 also marks the conclusion of a distinct and important decade of poetic development in Canada. I date the beginning of this decade from the first publication of *Contemporary Verse* in 1941 — I believe in the first months of 1941 — for many of the poets who appeared during the forties were introduced in the early issues of that magazine. Shortly afterwards, some of the same writers came together in Montreal and began producing publications of their own — *Preview* and *First Statement*, the two magazines which combined to form *Northern Review* — but *Contemporary Verse* had already stolen part of their thunder, and it deserves the first credit.

I would like to give a brief account both of the beginnings of this movement in Canadian poetry and of the changes that have taken place in it. I would gladly dispense with any mention of the beginnings, since they are now of ancient date, if anyone else had bothered to define them or recognize them *as* beginnings. People have begun to realize that the forties were a very active period in Canadian poetry, and have even said so in print : they have not explained that 1941 marks the beginning of a distinct period, but have simply lumped the thirties and forties indiscriminately together. It is time to correct this oversight. Critics who cannot see beyond the ends of their own categories, are lowly creatures, but the categories are necessary for the regular intake and discharge of facts.

It is true that the gap between the two periods has narrowed considerably in the past four years or so — a fact I will try to explain later. It is also true that the work produced by the younger poets, in the first few years of the forties, was in part a development of a tendency already quite apparent in the thirties. Apart from E. J. Pratt, and one or two others, Canadian poetry in the thirties was largely the product of three main groups: the so-called group of "Montreal Poets" — A. M. Klein, A. J. M. Smith, Leo Kennedy and F. R. Scott — whose work first began appearing in the *McGill Fortnightly Review*, and who dealt with religious problems to a large

extent and showed the influence of T. S. Eliot; the group of Raymond Knister, W. W. E. Ross and other poets who were influenced by the imagists; and the Western group of Earle Birney, Dorothy Livesay, Anne Marriott and others, whose early work was imagist with affinities with Ross and Knister, but whose main interest lay in the West rather than in rural Ontario and who broke completely with imagism as they developed. In the latter part of the thirties, under the impact of the depression and the prairie drought, and of the English Marxist school of Auden and Spender, the poets in these three groups either fell by the wayside (Ross was apparently an early casualty) or turned to political problems and identified themselves with the interest of a class. For some, this reformation was itself a swan-song. Leo Kennedy, a poet of very considerable promise, wrote a poem entitled *Calling Eagles*, summoning the intellectual eagles down from the "glacial crags" to the lowlands where the vital issues were being decided : he came down ; and he has scarcely been heard from since — not at all in the past ten years. A. J. M. Smith had a poem in the first issue of *Contemporary Verse*, in which he said "Replace the slave state face/With a face of bread" : he has published virtually nothing else in ten years. Although his first volume, *News of the Phoenix*, appeared belatedly in 1943, little or none of it was recent work. Anne Marriott has remained productive, but has never lived up to the promise of *The Wind Our Enemy* (1935). On the other hand, F. R. Scott, who was concerned with the issues of class from the very beginning, and A. M. Klein, who was comparatively unaffected by them, have continued to produce and to develop — notably Klein; and Earle Birney and Dorothy Livesay reached maturity under the stress of social problems and produced some of their best work.

The political theme had been announced, in some cases calamitously, and with no concerted voice : its full expression had to wait until the forties. The large group of new poets who appeared then — James Wreford, P. K. Page, Louis Dudek, Raymond Souster, Patrick Anderson, Miriam Waddington, Ronald Hambleton and several others — were all concerned, to a greater or less extent in individual cases, with the problems which they believed then arose from class divisions in society. Nor was the difference between the thirties and the early forties simply a quantitative one : there were also important differences in technique and in the approach to the political theme. The most clear-cut political group of the thirties — Birney, Livesay and Mariott — was mainly concerned with the land and with the fate

of an agricultural class : the new poets of the forties — nearly all of them residents of the East — saw the class issue in urban and industrial terms. The political poets of the thirties were essentially pragmatic in their outlook, prepared to adopt a cause and to devote their talents directly to its realization : the poets of the forties saw the contemporary world in psychological as well as political terms, and relied as much on Freud as Marx. The older poets had felt the impact of the English Marxist poetry of the thirties, but were relatively little influenced by the technical experiments of that period : the new poets sought to fuse the experiments of Auden and Spender with those of Dylan Thomas and George Barker — while endeavouring to preserve the burden of the political theme. These main differences, and others that might be enumerated, make it clear that a new kind of Canadian poetry was being written in the early forties.

Perhaps there was never a time in Canada when so many poets of promise appeared simultaneously or when, within the general pattern of the movement, there was so much creative variety, as in the early years of the forties. I suppose it is sacrilege to speak of it as a *Canadian* movement when the majority of its members professed a cosmopolitan faith and were opposed to the national idea in any form : yet Canadian in part it obviously was. The phenomenal development of Canada during the last war, relatively greater than that of any country in the same period, gave a marked impetus to poetry as it did to the arts generally. There was an excitement in the air to which no one — least of all the poet — could fail to respond. Even that political point of view, which generally left the national question out of account, was very much influenced in an indirect way by national factors. It is significant that the high point of this movement in Canadian poetry corresponded with the peak of leftist sentiment among Canadians generally.

How suddenly it all changed ! The First Statement Press had no sooner published *Other Canadians, An Anthology of the New Poetry in Canada, 1940-1946*, which I furnished with a bristling, defiant introduction, than the whole purpose and driving spirit of the "new movement" were in a state of decay. We had barely rushed to the side of this challenger of tradition, holding up his right — or rather his left — hand in the stance of victory, when the challenger laid his head upon the block and willingly submitted to having it removed. What were the causes ? Not *Other Canadians*, or my introduction to it : it went deeper than that. With the end of the war, there came a realization that, in the world at large, Russia and the United States

were not in a state of undeclared brotherly love, and that, at home, the Canadian socialist movement had very shallow roots. It would be foolish to base a literary judgment of this movement on the value of its political ideas : but there is no doubt that one of the driving forces behind it was politics, and that one of the reasons it lost part of its momentum was because it lost its political faith. There were, of course, other factors involved in its marked, if temporary decline : for example, the slowing down of the tempo everywhere by the return from war to a partial peace ; the tapering off of the Canadian movement of expansion ; and, last but not least, the poor durability of the poetic talents.

Apparently some of the poets I included in *Other Canadians* are no longer writing. Well, since they have ruled themselves out, it is better to forget about them and to concentrate on the remainder of the "new movement" and its prospects for the future. These prospects are less bleak than they were even a short while ago. It is evident that some of the younger poets are beginning to recover from their inertia of the late forties and that they are acquiring a new sense of purpose.

They are acquiring a new idea — or a variation of an old idea. In the introduction to *Other Canadians*, I wrote that the younger poets were resisting the dominant religious element of Canadian poetry, uniting, and throwing off their chains. That was only half-true then, and it is not at all true now. I criticized Mr. Smith, the editor of the *Book of Canadian Poetry*, for his religious emphasis, and I protested that his effort to force a religious interpretation on the new poets was not abiding by the rules and prophesied that it would prove futile. Well, I take it back. I still think Mr. Smith was forcing matters at that time, but the event has shown that he was substantially right. For the new poets have come back, if not always to religion, at least to a soul-searching which has strong religious implications, and to an attitude of mind more in harmony with that of earlier Canadian poets. In their writing they no longer attribute the present state of the world to class oppression, but to a guilt which makes no class distinctions and which involves every individual, including the poet. They speak now in a more personal way, exhibit a willingness to bear their share of the universal guilt, and seem to imply that the puritanical fury with which they once attacked the "middle class" was really a blustering way of hiding their own feeling of guilt. They look back to the poetic traditions, strive for a greater simplicity, and try to sing rather than to bluster forth protests.

A positive religious note is most apparent in the work of Kay Smith and James Wreford — two poets who have increasingly emphasized the religious element which was inherent even in their "socialist" poems. There is witness to Mr. Wreford's development in his new book, *Of Time and the Lover*, and to Miss Smith's in her powerful poem, the *Footnote to the Lord's Prayer*, published in the previous issue of Northern Review. We will find the same general tendency in the recent work of Patrick Anderson, in the preoccupation with autobiographical themes, in the absorption in the idea of guilt, and in the effort to associate the ideal of love with the vision of the artist who orders but does not judge. We will find it in recent poems by Miriam Waddington, in their exploration of the recesses of the self with the aid of recent psychological investigators, and in their use of a quasi-mystical language. We will also find it in the work of P.K. Page, who expressed the changing attitude of the younger poets in this poem published in 1947:

> Forgive us, who have not
> Been whole or rich as fruit;
> Who, through the eyes' lock enter
> A point beyond the centre
> To find our balance shot...
> Our blueprint was at fault.
>
> The edifice we built
> Disintegrates and falls:
> Haunting its ruined halls
> The spectre of our guilt...

Perhaps there is not one of the socialist poets who appeared in *Other Canadians* who would not say today that the "blueprint was at fault". There are few who have not been profoundly affected by what Miss Page calls "the spectre of our guilt". It would be misleading to conclude from this that we have harvested a new crop of "religious poets", but there is certainly a marked religious tendency in most recent work.

I hope no one is assuming that all this has occurred in an isolated vacuum, or only in the minds of Canadian poets (that is not meant as it sounds). The state of the world has given added emphasis to a religious tendency which has been present in contemporary poetry generally since the mid-thirties. Our own Canadian temper, which is strongly religious, and the example of T.S. Eliot, Edith Sitwell and other poets writing in England, incline poets in Canada to be receptive to poetic ideas of this kind. As a common

religious interest has led to a rapprochement between the older and younger generations in England, so for the same reason the poets of the thirties and the poets of the forties have drawn closer together in Canada. We will find some, or all of the same tendencies that I have been describing, in Earle Birney, Dorothy Livesay and Anne Marriott, in Robert Finch and A. J. M. Smith, and in F. R. Scott who, while he continues to express a political point of view in his verse, has seemed to stress more and more the religious metaphors and symbols which have always played a rather ambiguous role in his work.

This, then, is a general picture of how the movement of the forties developed and of its present condition. What, you may ask, is the value of the recent poetry, as compared with that produced in the early forties, and what is its development likely to be? I will answer the second part of the question first: I believe the present religious trend may become more marked; if not, I believe there will be a reaction against it. In explanation of this answer, I may say it is based on my experience in making prophecies in *Other Canadians.* I cannot think of a better basis.* As for the first part of the question, it seems obvious to me that the recent work of the younger poets is inferior to their work in the early forties, but that, nevertheless, the principles behind this recent work are potentially better principles for poetry. It is generally better for the poet to accept than oppose the values inherent in his society; it is better for him to be honestly himself than to disguise himself in a big abstraction — political *or* religious; it is better for him to aim at simplicity, than to perpetuate the obscurity which is gradually killing off the respect for poetry in the minds of intelligent readers; and it is better for him to use and not oppose the traditions of poetry — and for the Canadian poet not to completely ignore his relation to the tradition of poetry in Canada. These are all admirable tendencies in present-day Canadian poetry: so far they have not been realized fully enough to produce very striking or at least very extensive results. The question is whether the poet can find a new point of stability, re-discover the basic moral and religious values of our society, and by so doing achieve these results? But I already answered this when I answered the other part of my question.

* There are, of course, the possibilities that neither, or both, of the developments I prophesy will occur. In England at present there seems to be strong criticism of the resigned attitude of the religious poets, coupled with a demand that poetry embody a principle of action. For the editors of *Nine* at least, this seems to mean action based on traditional religious principles.

BOOKS

COLLECTED STORIES OF WILLIAM FAULKNER. Random House. Toronto. 900 pp. $6.00.

Time has been especially destructive of modern American writers, freezing some in the responses of a single decade (Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald), exposing the essential flabbiness, intellectually and emotionally, of others (Steinbeck, Saroyan). Again and again the shock of recognition has given rise to inflated claims; to be followed later, after the seeming betrayal, with the shattering of the idol. Among the few American writers who managed to escape this deadly cycle is William Faulkner. Allowed, by critics and readers alike, to develop pretty much on his own, he has developed; until now he is recognized for what he has long been — one of the most powerful and significant, if paradoxical and frequently extravagant, of all contemporary writers.

Recently Faulkner's publishers have reprinted a number of his books, including two collections of short stories. The present collection is therefore not a complete one: it contains forty-two stories, almost half of them published here for the first time; but missing from it are some of Faulkner's most moving and successful pieces of short fiction ("Was", for example, and "The Bear"), which are available elsewhere. And while this is a valuable and important book, not all of the stories contained in it are of real consequence. Those about the first war, and in fact most of the stories placed outside the American South, are a little thin: too much invention; sometimes even intrusive echoes of lesser writers. Also among the stories which must finally be regarded as failures are several which have as their background the South. These are particularly significant, and I want to return to them later.

To understand Faulkner, his triumphs and his failures, is not too difficult the moment one considers what is the underlying strength of almost all his stories about the South. For these stories have their firm roots in Faulkner's sense of a living tradition and a meaningful history; they have roots in a community which feels

itself to be distinct from other communities, a society confident of its own identity and beliefs. Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County may be in large part legendary (it is interesting that among the most successful stories in this book are several, like "Red Leaves" and "A Justice", which can be read as though they were in fact legends), and it may be peopled with fictitious characters. Yet for Faulkner Yoknapatawpha exists; and we may assume that for the people among whom he has lived for most of his life, the territory of his novels and stories has also a kind of reality.

Faulkner is of course more than a regional writer. I suspect that his larger view of the South is of a territory peculiarly situated to afford contrasts with the modern world. For although as far as I am aware American critics have not mentioned this point, Faulkner's attitude towards modern society seems to be based on an interpretation of history much like that to be found in Spengler's *Decline of the West*. It is the virtue of the South that, exhausted, besieged and even corrupted as it may be, it has at least never fully accepted the wintertime existence of the great industrial society which crushes down upon it from the North.

Yet the pressure has been there for a long time now. As I have already mentioned there are a few stories about the South in this book which are inferior to Faulkner's best work. They are recent stories, about the second world war; and with the novel *Intruder in the Dust*, they suggest that Faulkner may be entering a critical stage in his development as a writer. Too often today the pressures are denounced in the (desperate) language of rhetoric.

In this review I have disregarded the technical aspects of Faulkner's writing, and these are certainly important. However, the omission has been a deliberate one; for it seems to me that of all modern American writers, Faulkner can most fruitfully be studied in the first instance from the viewpoint of attitudes and ideas. Recently I happened to reread Wyndham Lewis's *Men Without Art* (1934), in which Faulkner is identified as "The Moralist with a Corn Cob" and his similarity to Conrad is mentioned in passing. As a critic, Lewis had his flagrant idiosyncrasies; but I think that here he struck a vein which might well bear further working.

ROBERT L. WEAVER.

Books in Brief

SCENERY DESIGN FOR THE AMATEUR STAGE, by Willard J. Friederich and John H. Fraser. The Macmillan Company of Canada. $3.75.

Except in the case of a few groups of semi-professional caliber, probably the weakest part of most amateur dramatic productions is the stage setting. While a great deal of energy and imagination is usually evidenced in the matter of direction, costume and acting, the scenery generally shows itself to be what it is — makeshift.

All groups, without exception, are plagued with budget troubles and are forced into compromise and makeshift when planning their productions, but compromise and makeshift are no excuse for bad design and lack of imagination. Imagination cannot be learned from a book, but the principles of stage design can be easily set down and illustrated.

This book, designed as a textbook for a university course in scenery design, should prove extremely valuable to all amateur groups, particularly those who would like to try something new in their stage settings but are hampered by ill-equipped and badly planned stages. Pre-supposing a knowledge of actual scenic construction methods it concentrates on showing how to make the most of limited resources while adhering strictly to the fundamentals of good stage design.

An important feature of the book is the generous number of photographs of actual sets plus the liberal sprinkling of line drawings used to illustrate the text. Beginning with a discussion of the various styles of scenic design — formalism, stylism, realism etc., the authors look at the set from the point of view of the demands of script, the stage and the audience. Following this they deal with the elements of design, colour, line, mass, working drawings, models and special types of scenery. A selected bibliography is included.

H. G. D.

THE MARE'S NEST by Paul Griffith, Macmillan, pp 369.

Regardless of what the jacket claims, this book is hardly satisfactory as a novel. We can only justify such a definition if we consider it a "picaresque" novel, for it is certainly concerned with rogues and

roguery, but even as such it is less a novel than a collection of short stories or incidents, its unity of time and place being only a convenient peg on which to hang the merest thread of continuity.

Laid among the Indians, Mexicans and deserts of the American South-west, this book attempts a microscopic examination of the inhabitants of the town of St. Andrews, which may or may not be successful, depending upon how typical or atypical these mythical inhabitants of this mythical town are thought to be. Since the examination is largely anatomical, and since the author seems fascinated by abnormalities above all else, the town assumes a nightmare quality that is not altogether convincing. There is something of Celine in this, but without his power, profundity or purpose. The resulting sense of aridity, however, may not be out of place.

The trouble is that the author is in love with the sound of his own words. He doesn't know where to stop. Strictly speaking, he doesn't know where to begin, either. He starts at random and unleashes a torrent of detail and irrelevant incident, a down-pour of unnecessary verbiage, in which plot, form and interest all drown and float away.

Out of this, however, emerge one or two characters of undeniable strength and several passages of excellent writing. Some of the incidents are interesting in themselves, but nowhere do the characters, writing or incidents achieve sufficient importance to give the book the unity that the novel form demands. Since this is a "first novel", we can make excuses on that ground. It is to be hoped that to his evident capability, the author, in his next book, will bring judgment and good taste. If he does, we can anticipate a novel written with skill and to be read with interest.

R.G.S.

CANADIAN ART, by Graham McInnes, Macmillan, pp 114, $4.00.

Any attempt to trace the history and progress of Art in Canada should be undertaken by those who have a sympathetic understanding, not only of the country itself, but also of the two major cultural heritages that, separately and together, are the foundation of our artistic appreciation and expression.

Graham McInnes, while not a native-born Canadian, has apparently acquired, during the fifteen years he has resided in Canada, a surprizingly keen insight into, and understanding of, the problems

that have beset the growth of art here. In this book he has traced, lucidly and capably, the successive stages of all branches of the visual arts in Canada, and has done so in a most readable fashion. He has told his story succinctly and in a manner that will be interesting not only to the artist and the student of art and art appreciation, but to the public generally. It should prove to be a timely stimulus to the increasing interest in recognizably Canadian achievement in all forms of Art. It will commend itself, also, as an opportunity to view the growth of our vast and virile young country through the eyes of its artists.

G.W.S.

TRESPASS AGAINST NONE by E. C. Morris, Whitcombe & Gilmour, pp 317, $3.00.

A satire on the writing and publishing of pornographic novels, this new book by a Canadian author is not likely to edify though it may serve to amuse. Undistinguished in most respects, it contains an unusual juxtaposition of garbled writing on the one hand and effectively precise writing on the other. Haste is, perhaps, the culprit. If it touches only on the surface of things, it nevertheless contains some sharp-eyed observation of manners and mannerisms and a refreshingly straight-faced brand of humour.

L.P.

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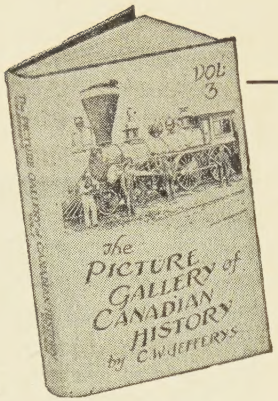

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